

CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. (thrice amended) A method for treating a joint having first and second mating joint surfaces comprising the following steps:
  - removing at least a portion of the first joint surface to expose a cancellous bone surface;
  - selecting a totally bioresorbable implant having a face adapted to face the removed portion of the first joint surface;
  - placing the bioresorbable implant between and in contact with the first and second joint surfaces so that the face is opposite the first joint surface and the implant initially keeps said exposed cancellous bone surface spaced apart from the second joint surface while permitting slidable motion between the face and the first joint surface; and
  - using the joint;
  - whereby the cancellous bone surface initially forms fibroblast at the first joint surface which progresses into fibrocartilage as the implant is resorbed so the fibrocartilage effectively replaces the implant during such resorption.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of selecting the bioresorbable implant made of a polymer of lactic acid.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the selecting step is carried out by selecting a lactic acid copolymer.
4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
  - estimating the period time it will take for the fibroblast to progress into fibrocartilage; and
  - selecting the bioresorbable implant of a size, shape and material according to said period of time.
5. (amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of ensuring the exposed cancellous bone surface and the face of the bioresorbable implant placed against said cancellous bone surface have complementary surface shapes.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the ensuring step includes the step of selecting curved surface shapes as said complementary surface shapes.

8. (amended) A method for treating a substantially non-weight bearing arthritic joint having first and second mating joint surfaces comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first and second joint surfaces to expose first and second cancellous bone surfaces;

selecting a bioresorbable implant having first and second implant faces corresponding to the first and second cancellous bone surfaces;

placing the first and second implant faces of the bioresorbable implant between and against the first and second exposed cancellous bone surfaces so as to permit relative slidable motion between the first and second faces and the first and second joint surfaces; and using the joint;

whereby fibroblast is initially formed which progresses into fibrocartilage at each said cancellous bone surface as the implant is resorbed, thereby effectively replacing the implant during such resorption.

9. (amended) The method of claim 8 wherein the selecting step is carried out by selecting said bioresorbable implant having a generally semi-spherically shaped joint surface as the first implant surface.

10. The method of claim 8 further comprising the steps of:  
estimating the period of time it will take for the fibroblast to progress into fibrocartilage; and  
selecting the bioresorbable implant of a size and material according to said period of time.

24. (thrice amended) A method for treating at least one degenerated surface on a cancellous bone, the surface being one of first and second relatively movable surfaces defining a body joint, the method comprising the steps of resecting the bone to form a cancellous bone surface, placing a bioresorbable implant between the first and second surfaces to thereby space the surfaces apart, providing the implant with at least one face which is opposite and shaped complementary to at least one of the first and second surfaces, allowing

the face to move relative to the at least one of the first and second surfaces, permitting growth of fibroblast on the cancellous surface and conversion of the fibroblast into fibrocartilage during the allowing step, maintaining a spacing between the body joint defining surfaces during the permitting step, and waiting for the body to gradually resorb the implant during the permitting step so that, upon resorption of the implant, the fibrocartilage forms at least one of the body joint defining surfaces.

25. (amended) A method for treating a joint having first and second mating joint surfaces comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first joint surface to expose a cancellous bone surface;

placing a bioresorbable implant between and in contact with the first and second joint surfaces so the implant initially keeps said exposed cancellous bone surface spaced apart from the second joint surface;

providing the implant with a face which is opposite the first surface;

permitting relative motion between the face and the first surface; and

using the joint, which includes moving the face relative to the first surface;

whereby the cancellous bone surface initially forms fibroblast which progresses into fibrocartilage as the implant is resorbed so the fibrocartilage effectively replaces the implant during such resorption;

estimating the period of time it will take for the fibroblast to progress into fibrocartilage; and

selecting the bioresorbable implant of a size, shape and material according to said period of time.

26. (amended) A method for treating a joint having first and second mating joint surfaces comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first joint surface to expose a cancellous bone surface;

forming a cavity into the medullary canal of the exposed cancellous bone surface;

selecting a bioresorbable implant configured to fit between the first and second joint surfaces, the implant having a face, a backside and a stem portion extending from the backside and configured to fit within said cavity;

inserting the stem portion into the cavity and placing the bioresorbable implant between the first and second joint surfaces so the implant initially keeps said exposed cancellous bone surface spaced apart from the second joint surface and the face is slidably movable relative to the first joint surface; and

using the joint, including moving the face relative to the first joint surface;

whereby the cancellous bone surface initially forms fibroblast which progresses into fibrocartilage as the implant is resorbed so the fibrocartilage effectively replaces the implant during such resorption.